



Exercise 4.1

What Went Wrong?



Most of us have had a few less-than-ideal communication experiences. In this exercise, participants have a chance to resurrect those moments and challenge another team to identify the problem and suggest a solution. This exercise depends on the members of the group having some prior experience with public communication and gives you a chance to assess their experiences for future exercises.

Objectives: Participants will be able to do the following:

1. Recall examples of poor communication.
2. Suggest reasons for the communication problem and strategies to change the situation.

Materials:

Pack of 3" x 5" cards
Watch or timer
Fact Sheet 4.1: Communication Basics
Presentation 4.1

Time: 30 minutes after your introduction

1. The purpose of this exercise is to introduce helpful communication strategies and encourage your participants to interact with each other. Introduce the value of communicating with target audiences and the potential costs of not communicating well. Depending on the experiences of your group, you may wish to outline the points included in **Fact Sheet 4.1: Communication Basics** or Section 1 of the **Module 4 Trainer's Guide**. **Presentation 4.1** includes background information and slides that explain this exercise. Mention that they probably all have had good and not-so-good experiences while communicating. Ask them to focus, for this exercise, on the not-so-good ones. Each group will come up with an example of poor communication, write it on a card, and exchange it with another group. The receiving groups will analyze the situations, decide what the problem(s) might be, and suggest ways to improve or prevent them.
2. Use one of these examples to demonstrate the process:
 - a) *You walk into a community meeting and you observe that you are ethnically different from everyone else. You begin your presentation but get the distinct impression you are not connecting and they are not listening.*

The problem may be that you (the Sender) are unknown and are clearly different. You may be using examples that don't fit the audience's reality. You may not have credibility with this audience.

One potential solution is to identify a community leader from this ethnic group prior to the meeting and work with him or her to come up with relevant examples and meaningful messages. Ask that person to introduce you and to participate in the presentation.

- b)** *You bring a few wildlife specimens to an elementary school for a presentation. Despite your enthusiasm, the kids are focused on the stuffed animals and want to pet them. You can't let that happen, because the oils in their hands will destroy the fur. You put the animals away, but never get their attention back.*

The problem is you have a prop that gets more of their attention than you do!

One solution is to bring specimens that can be passed around. Use props to focus their attention on the message and ask the children to make observations about them. If specimens that can be handled are not available, come up with engaging exercises or games that emphasize your message. Try to get away from the lecture format, especially with kids too young to sit still.

- 3.** When the workshop participants understand the task, divide them into teams of 3 to 5 people and ask everyone to think about situations or difficulties they have had in the general realm of communication. Ask each team to generate three problematic situations and describe those on the cards. When they have completed the task (10 minutes or so), collect the cards and exchange them among groups. Give them about 10 minutes to review the challenges and compose their suggestions. Then ask each group to present their ideas to the group that created the challenges (10 minutes).

Summary

Wrap up the discussion by outlining the similarities they have identified in the analyses and suggestions. Emphasize those points that you wish to cover in the rest of the training, such as the following:

- Understand your audience.
- Choose examples and topics that appeal to this particular audience.
- Build trust in you and your agency.
- Use words and phrases the audience understands.
- Diffuse conflict by identifying common ground.
- Use pilot groups to test materials before they are produced.
- Use questions to engage an audience.
- Use hands-on activities to engage youngsters.